



# Grey County

Colour It Your Way

## Housing and Homelessness 2016 Report

Down with Homelessness - Up with Housing!



# Summary

This annual report highlights the progress made on goals of the Grey County 10-Year Housing and Homelessness plan in 2016.

The update includes funding initiatives, success stories, pilot projects and highlights teamwork among community members, service providers and Grey County. Together we can help everyone have safe, appropriate and affordable housing.

## Mission

To collaborate with community partners and private enterprises to develop a coordinated system of services needed by residents of the Grey County to obtain, maintain and sustain safe appropriate and affordable housing.

## Background

**The Grey County Housing and Homelessness Plan** forms the **10-year strategy** for improving the housing and homelessness system in Grey County. The plan builds on past successes, enhances current programs and promotes and strengthens community networks.

Everyone deserves a safe, appropriate and affordable place to live.



The Housing department has begun incorporating a “Colour It Home” slogan into the buildings and homes within the county. The department created a logo using the words tenants provided during National Housing Day.



National Housing Day was also celebrated at the Grey County Administration Building. Employees visited an information station and “Did you know?” boards Housing and services offered.

The first annual National Housing Day event was successful internally and throughout Housing buildings.

“A place I can call home”

“A warm place of safety”.

"An affordable, clean, place to call home".

“A place of new beginnings”.

**“Meeting new friends, a housing team that helps you when you need it”**

“A place I feel safe and secure”.



# Did you know?



We provided 1162 requests for funding through the Sustainable Housing Benefit for expenses related to obtaining or maintaining housing.



Grey County has 888 units of rent-geared-to-income housing operated by the Housing Department. The department also supports 603 nonprofit housing units



Grey County has 888 units over 4,500km<sup>2</sup> that includes 25 buildings and 172 family homes in small rural communities.



The Housing department has 22 active community partnerships (and growing) to improve the health and wellbeing of tenants. These include community gardens, good food boxes, family health teams, and children's mental health.



Housing and Information Technology departments are working towards putting free internet into Grey County buildings.

## 2016 Progress on Grey County Housing & Homelessness Plan

### Creating Affordable Housing

- 112 people assisted with monthly financial housing subsidy at an average of \$200 a month
- \$262,000 spent helping 23 households make repairs and increase energy efficiency in their homes through the Ontario Renovates Program
- \$150,000 spent helping 18 households make a down payment on homes through the Homeownership Program
- Development charges fund of \$50,000 to support affordable housing
- Development charges fee deferral agreement
- Continued work with sector associations for federal and provincial investment in social and affordable housing
- Development Charges By-law to exempt second units within or attached to existing buildings from having to pay for development charges
- Expression of interest to build affordable housing
  - 26 units eligible for funding
  - \$115,456 in Social Housing Energy Efficiency Program funding to increase energy efficiency in 63 homes



# Sustaining Affordable Housing

- Supported Grey Bruce Public Health in the Above Standard Housing Project for Grey and Bruce counties. Hosted focus groups with tenants, landlords and municipal by-law officers.
- \$3,388,695.00 spent in support of ten non-profit housing providers to offer affordable housing
- \$1,226,200 through Social Housing Improvement program for capital repair for non-profit and Grey County Housing
- \$100,000 to install sprinkler system in housing with related supports



## Preventing Homelessness

Sustainable Housing Benefit can assist with the cost of obtaining housing through last month's rent and utility deposits, as well as maintaining housing via rental arrears, utility arrears and limited other emergencies.

- \$602,000 was distributed through the Sustainable Housing benefit.
- Helped 347 households move to affordable housing via \$213,000 towards last month's rent.
- Helped 247 households with utility arrears totaling \$163,000
- Funding through community enhancement funds to support various community initiatives such as, community meals, community gardens, transportation costs, etc.

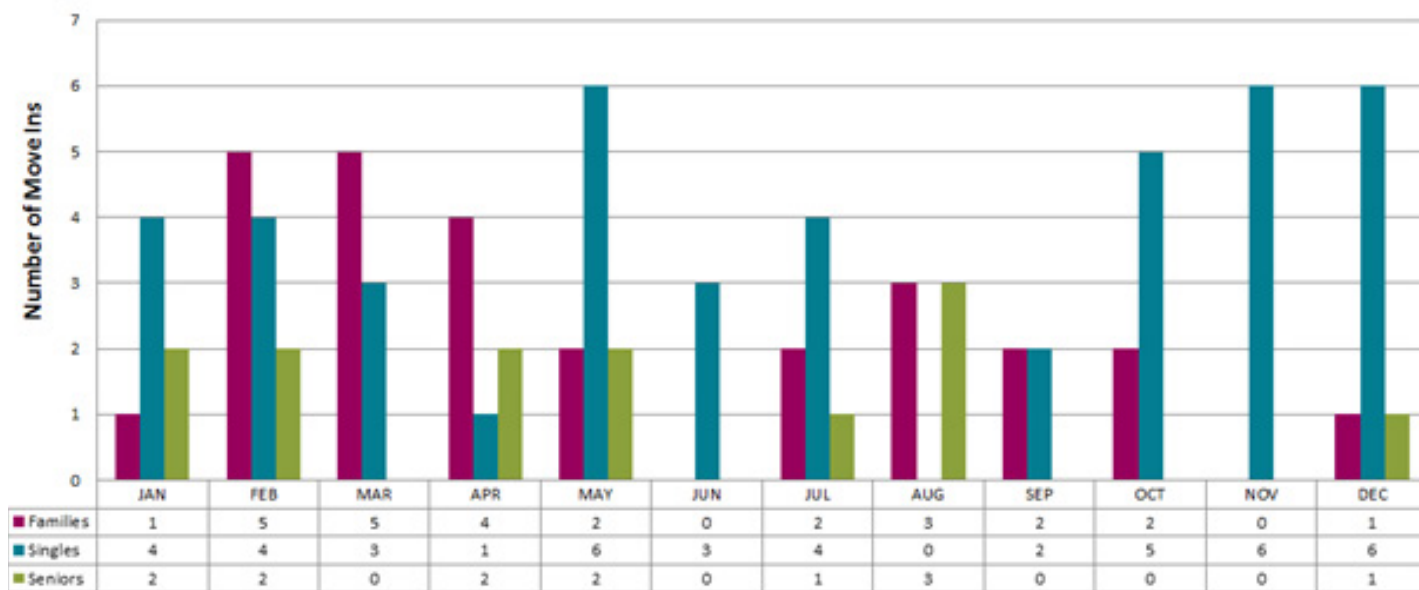
## Community Relations Worker (CRW)

- Support for Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force and the various projects in transportation, food security, housing and income security and health.
- Grey County is working toward developing a rural transportation plan
- Grey County is working with community partners and agencies to bring services in to Grey County Housing, such as literacy, employment, active living, dietary, and healthy living

# What is Social Housing?

In Grey County, there are 888 units of rent-geared-to-income housing operated by the Housing Department. In addition, the department also supports an additional 603 non-profit housing units.

Grey County Housing Monthly and YTD Move Ins 2016



Grey County Housing moved in a total of 84 households in 2016. Of those move ins, 27 were single/couples, 44 families and 13 senior households.

## What is Rent-Geared-to-Income Assistance

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance is commonly called subsidized housing. People who are eligible for RGI assistance pay reduced rent that is roughly equal to 30% of their total gross household income.



# Community Partnerships and Initiatives

## Cardiovascular Health Awareness Program

Grey County Housing, in partnership with **Grey County Paramedic Services** and **Health Links**, is bringing proactive **health care into our buildings** with the Cardiovascular Health Awareness Program.

“It helps keep you ahead of your health.”

“It’s a fabulous program and I’m so grateful to live here and receive all of these wonderful services.”

There are roughly 18 patients seen on average each week at the CHAP-EMS clinic. In addition to the paramedic individual health assessments/review and health teaching, various clinical service groups also provide information on topics of interest to participants (health concerns, housing, social, nutrition etc.).

- Research project conducted by McMaster University
- Partnership of the Grey County Paramedic Services, Grey County Housing, Health Links and McMaster University
- Improves the health of older adults by monitoring blood pressure, weight, sugar levels, cardiovascular health and other health related items
- Results in fewer 911 calls, fewer trips to the emergency room and healthier residents!
- Operates at no cost to tenants living in 305 and 225 14<sup>th</sup> St West, Owen Sound





# Hope Grey Bruce

Grey County has a partnership with Hope Grey Bruce to provide mental health outreach supports in Grey County Housing Buildings.

- Pilot project to help tenants maintain tenancy or enhance tenancy
- Provide one on one and group support to tenants
- Provide support and education to staff
- Facilitate access to Hope Grey Bruce services for tenants
- Assist with expert representation with other mental health agencies
- Work with Community Relations Workers to identify other community resources
- HopeGreyBruce Mental Health & Addictions Services is a non-profit charitable organization. It was established in 1985 to develop a number of community mental health and addictions programs across Grey-Bruce. Hope Grey Bruce currently operates 2 addiction programs and 8 community mental health programs.



## Housing with Related Supports

Grey County has helped with room and board costs for vulnerable persons since the early 1980's. Currently the County has engaged in service agreements with six homes that provide a home-like setting for adults who require assistance with personal care and daily living. Residents are cared for by qualified staff who help with medication, personal care, daily routines, laundry and meals. Homes are inspected on a yearly basis by the County to insure the safety and wellbeing of their residents. Housing with Related Supports provides an opportunity for vulnerable residents of Grey County to live in a safe and welcoming environment.





# Grey Bruce Task Force on Crystal Meth and Other Drugs

For a number of years, this cross sector network has been working to find solutions to the community impacts of drugs and alcohol abuse throughout Grey and Bruce Counties. In 2016, new opportunities allowed for the hiring of a fulltime coordinator to support the goals and objectives of the task force. Consultations with persons and families impacted, as well as with service providers and community organizations, were undertaken and have led to a need for a rebranding process that will ensure a relevant and engaging brand identity for the Task Force. In addition, an internal evaluation will review the overall organizational effectiveness, with goals that include looking at how well the Task Force has performed—what’s working well, where the challenges have been and what needs to be considered moving forward. All of this preparatory work will support the Task Force as we face the increasing challenges of opioid use and the legalization of marijuana impacts to families and communities.

## Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaboration (BG DISC)

The Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative (BG DISC) is a collective of non-profit, social service, government, health and education organizations. They share vital rural data to better inform regional programming, policies and funding for social supports.

## Alpha Street Pavilion

Volunteers laboured together to build a pavilion for the Grey County Housing residents living at Alpha Street. Movies can be projected on one of the outside walls of the pavilion storage room, and there’s a full-wall chalkboard where kids can colour and draw. Picnic tables and garden boxes were also built as part of the project. The boxes went to other county-run apartment properties.

“I think it’s a great idea that we all came together to build it,” said Renne Schlonies.

Renne is an Alpha Street tenant and the Volunteer Coordinator at the Alpha Street Family Resource Center.

The pavilion has been a great addition to Alpha Street and tenant families have been enjoying the sports equipment storage, shelter, art wall and the gathering space that the pavilion is providing.



# Getting Ahead Graduates

The Getting Ahead program is a Bridges Out of Poverty initiative. It is a forward thinking, landmark project based on the work of Dr. Ruby K. Payne, Phil DeVol and Teri Dreussi Smith who co-authored the book *Bridges out of Poverty*.

The participants of Getting Ahead need to be ready to make the change to a more stable environment. In Getting Ahead, they are considered investigator; they do the work to discover the solutions and they are in charge of their own change.

The County of Grey offers the Getting Ahead Program throughout Grey County in partnership with the Adult Learning Centre, Y Employment and the United Way.

Graduates leave the program with personalized plans for their futures. Some have gone on to post-secondary education, joined the work force, and further participated in the program as co-facilitators. Several have been involved with the local Poverty Task Force by participating in Community Voices. This program truly changes lives.

## Locations:

- Owen Sound
- Meaford
- Hanover
- Durham
- Markdale
- Dundalk

## Stats:

- 24 groups
- 172 Graduates
- 89% Retention

*“To me personally, it shows that I am not alone and that other people have the same problems and concerns that I have. I now have a sense of hope and determination to push myself forward up out of the low poverty life that I have found myself in. I feel that there is hope for me. There are people to help me or point me in the direction of someone who can help me. So I think that for me graduation means hope.”*

# Grey Bruce Poverty Task Force

The Poverty Task Force’s core purpose is to facilitate community partnerships to advocate for poverty reduction and elimination.

In 2016, the task force regularly brought together over 51 social agencies, community-based organizations and people of low-income to examine the root causes of poverty and barriers to change, and to identify priority collective actions. Examples of activities include:

- Projects in five sectors: food security, income security, housing, transportation and health equity such as completion of a food bank survey, Food Bank Summit, Bruce Grey food asset GIS map, Above Standard Housing Project, outreach services for people at risk of homelessness, transportation pilot project.
- Engaging with policy makers at municipal, provincial and federal levels on policies that directly affect people on low income: basic income pilot, above standard housing, payday loan/debt collection regulation, long-term energy strategy and community transportation.
- Build capacity of people who live in poverty to advocate at local, regional and provincial levels.

# Homeownership

This program is designed to provide renters with a loan, up to 5% of the purchase price, to assist them in purchasing their own home. Applicants must be eligible for a mortgage and must meet program eligibility.

- 18 households assisted with down payment assistance in 2016 totalling \$150,000



## *Testimonial:*

"My Experience with the (Investment in Affordable Housing) Homeownership Program offered through Grey County was one of the unexpected positives in today's world. The information was delivered clearly, guidance and assistances was supportive from the beginning right through to the home closing date. In few words, I would say 10 out of 10. Thank you and hope to see the program keep on going!"

# Ontario Renovates

Ontario Renovates helps low to moderate income homeowners repair and renovate their homes or make them more accessible. Grants are provided up to \$5,000 for accessibility renovations. Repairs can include roofs, windows, doors, furnace, insulation and certain accessibility upgrades.

- 23 projects for home renovations in 2016 totalling \$262,000

## *Success Story:*

"I am a 63 year old single female living in an old house in Grey County. I needed a new furnace, mine was old. I dearly wanted to get these two projects done for a long time, but getting the cash together was difficult. Through Grey County – Ontario Renovates program, I received a new high efficiency furnace installed, and all new cleanable windows. It has made a huge difference in my heating and electricity bills. Thank you so much Grey County!"



# What's next?

- Build 22 affordable housing units with Owen Sound Housing Company
- Local Homelessness Enumeration Plan
- Expand Good Food Box program
- Last phase high rise recladding
- Last phase Alpha Street regeneration
- Child Care Strategy
- Transportation pilot project – phase 2
- Creation of transitional supportive housing units
- Expand CHAP-EMS program to other sites
- Expand free WIFI in Grey County housing buildings





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